Rebozo Bid for Hughes Gift Cited

By William Claiborne
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon's confidant, C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo, is portrayed in Senate Watergate committee memorandum as pressiny an associate of billionaire Howard Hughes for large financial contributions sometime after February, 1969.

The associate told Watergate investigators that he got the impression from a friend of Rebozo that after the contributions were made, Hughes' antitrust problems with the federal government could be more easily handled, according to the Watergate committee staff document.

The interview of former Hughes aide Robert A. Maheu is recounted in a memorandum by Watergate committee investigator Scott Armstorng.

Watergate committee sources have said that Richard Danner, a Hughes aide and friend of Rebozo, testified in closed session that Mr. Nixon was present at a 1968 meeting when a request was made for a campaign contribution from Hughes.

Sources said Danner testified he could not remember whether the request came personally from the President or from Rebozo, who also was present.

Rebozo has said in a deposition that he acted as a recipient of the $100,000 and held it for three years without asking for what purpose the money would be used. He said he returned the money in the spring of 1973 on the advice of an attorney.

The Sept. 19, 1973, memo went from Armstrong to Terry Lenzner, assistant majority counsel of the Watergate committee. It was released June 13 by U.S. District Court Judge Harry Pregerson of Los Angeles on the last day of testimony in a $17.5 million defamation suit brought by Maheu against a Hughes-owned corporation.

Danner, has testified under oath that he delivered two secret $50,000 cash contributions from Hughes to Rebozo in 1970 for Mr. Nixon's re-election.

That money, which Rebozo has said was kept in a safe deposit box in his Key Biscayne bank, has since come under investigation by the Senate Watergate committee and the special prosecutor's office.

The Washington Post has quoted sources as saying that Herbert Kalmbach, Mr. Nixon's former attorney, testified in secret before the Senate committee that some of the money went to the President's brother F. Donald and to Mr. Nixon's secretary, Rose Mary Woods.

In the memo, Armstrong quoted Maheu as saying he had been informed by Danner that before the first $50,000 contribution was made, Rebozo told Danner that "Hughes had not made a substantial contribution to the Nixon ccampaign."

"Maheu got the impression from Danner that after the contribution Hughes' problems with the federal government would be easier to take care of," Armstrong wrote.

At the time, there were indications that the antitrust division of the Justice Department would not approve of Hughes' purchase of additional hotel properties in Las Vegas, since he already owned several hotels in the city.

In a deposition filed in connection with his lawsuit against Hughes, Maheu has sworn that he did not detect any serious attempts by Hughes to buy the Dunes Hotel in Las Vegas until Danner "secured a commitment from the Attorney General, John Mitchell, to the effect that the Justice Department would not object to Mr. Hughes or the Hughes Tool Co. acquiring another major entity in south Nevada."

According to Maheu, Hughes subsequently decided against buying the Dunes after making a closer examination of the hotel's profit record.

In the release version of the Armstrong memo, portions of which were deleted by the court, Hughes was quoted as telling Maheu that he would contribute $1 million to any candidate who would stop Atomic Energy Commission underground testing.

Washington Post special correspondent Robert Meyers contributed to this story.